

More than 60 young climate innovators from around the world arrive in Milan to launch a five-city journey across Italy

Youth4Climate returns to the city where it began at Pre-COP26 in 2021, connecting youth-led solutions with leading Italian institutions, universities and businesses

Milan, 20 October 2026 - More than 60 young climate innovators from around the world have gathered in Milan to begin a five-city journey across Italy, bringing solutions developed in their own communities into conversation with businesses, universities, public institutions and other partners that can help them grow.

Behind the event is Youth4Climate, a programme co-led by the Government of Italy and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to help young people turn climate ideas into real projects through funding, training, mentorship and connections. First launched in Milan at Pre-COP26 in 2021, the programme has since supported **200 youth-led solutions across 69 countries** with an envelope of **USD +5 million in direct catalytic funding**. Five years later, it returns to where it began with the event “Youth4Climate: Connecting Solutions”, bringing 50 newly selected 2026 projects to Italy for a week focused on what comes next: implementation, partnerships and scale.

From 19 to 23 October, participants will travel through **Milan, Venice, Bologna, Naples and Rome**, engaging with leading Italian institutions, universities, companies and research organisations working across different parts of the country's climate and innovation ecosystem.

The event began at Palazzo Marino, where the Milan program offered young innovators the opportunity to engage directly with key players from public policy, research, finance, business, fashion and ocean action. Participants got the chance to engage with the **Comune di Milano and Lombardy Region, Bocconi University and Politecnico di Milano, Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana, Generali, One Ocean Foundation, E4Impact and UN Global Compact Network Italy**.

«Milano is honoured to host the launch of this study tour because it was here, in 2021, that Youth4Climate began its journey, bringing together young people from across the world to make their voices heard in the global climate debate. Since then, the initiative has grown into a global empowering platform for youth. It is refreshing and inspiring to see participants' commitment and enthusiasm», said Giuseppe Sala, Mayor of Milan.

«Youth4Climate – promoted by the Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security and the United Nations Development Programme – is grounded in the importance of making young people protagonists of tomorrow's economy. It pursues this goal through concrete projects designed to channel their skills and energy in an active, collaborative way. It is a tangible

project-based response featuring young people who are building and committing to a more sustainable future. Lombardy Region is investing in this direction through dedicated measures, such as 'La Lombardia è dei Giovani' (€2.1 million), 'Giovani in Rete' (€1 million), 'Giovani SMART' (€5.6 million), and the 'Hub Giovani' with Unimont and ANCI (€2 million), promoting participation, sports, volunteering, and inclusion», highlighted Federica Picchi, Undersecretary for Sports and Youth Policies of Lombardy Region.

Following the Milan opening, participants will split into different thematic routes. In **Venice**, one group will explore how architecture, design, urban planning and ocean literacy can contribute to climate adaptation, with visits and exchanges involving **Iuav University of Venice, UNDP Local Action Winter School, UNESCO's SEABEYOND Ocean Literacy Centre, The Human Safety Net and Carlo Ratti Associati**. A second group will travel through **Bologna and Naples**. In Bologna, participants will engage with **Gruppo Hera and Tetra Pak** around the energy transition, circular economy, advanced materials and sustainable food systems, before visiting **Forno Brisa** to explore climate-conscious entrepreneurship and local supply chains. In Naples, the programme at the **University of Naples Federico II** will focus on digital innovation, artificial intelligence and agritech, including exchanges with the **Apple Developer Academy** and the **National Research Centre on Agricultural Technologies**.

The full cohort will then reunite in **Rome**, where the journey concludes with the Youth4Climate **Awards Ceremony**, recognising the 50 projects selected through the 2026 Call for Solutions. Participants will also take part in further institutional engagements, including a visit to the **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)** focused on innovation and agrifood systems transformation.

The week reflects a broader ambition behind Youth4Climate, ensuring that promising youth-led solutions have support not only to get started, but to develop, demonstrate results and ultimately reach more people. As we move towards **COP31**, the global climate conversation is increasingly focused on implementation: not only what governments and institutions commit to, but how those commitments translate into action, and who has the opportunity and resources to deliver it. Youth-led solutions have an important role in that process. Giving young innovators access to finance, expertise, partnerships and decision-makers can help ensure that implementation also draws on solutions already being developed and tested in communities around the world.

Through its annual Call for Solutions, Youth4Climate provides selected projects with up to **USD 30,000** in direct catalytic funding, alongside mentorship, technical guidance, capacity development, visibility and access to a global network of peers and partners.

Results from earlier cohorts are already showing what can happen after that initial support. Among the projects that have completed their Youth4Climate-funded activities, **80 per cent** continue beyond the grant period, with solutions expanding their operations, reaching new

communities and attracting additional resources. Across the wider portfolio, Youth4Climate-supported projects have mobilised more than **USD 1.7 million** in additional funding as of September 2026.

“Together with UNDP, the Italian Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security has built on the idea launched in Milan, turning it into a lasting initiative that engages young people in climate action and supports them in bringing their ideas to life. To date, Youth4Climate has supported 200 projects in 69 countries—a result I am proud of. The Study Tour offers young people a further opportunity to develop their projects and connect with Italy’s leading institutions, universities, research centres and businesses, and to learn from their expertise and experience,” stated Gilberto Pichetto Fratin, Italian Minister of the Environment and Energy Security.

“As the global climate conversation increasingly turns towards implementation, we also need to ask who has the opportunity and resources to deliver solutions. Young innovators are already testing practical responses to climate challenges in communities around the world. Through Youth4Climate, we want to ensure they have access not only to funding, but also to the expertise, partnerships and networks that can help those solutions develop, demonstrate results and ultimately reach more people. This event also reflects the strength of our growing partnership with the wider network of Italian institutions, universities, research centres and businesses that are creating new opportunities for young innovators to connect with the knowledge and expertise that can help their solutions move forward,” said Agostino Inguscio, Head of the UNDP Rome Centre.

About Youth4Climate

Young people around the world are already developing solutions to the climate challenges affecting their communities, but many still lack the funding, knowledge and connections needed to take those ideas further.

Youth4Climate was created to help close that gap.

Co-led by the Government of Italy and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Youth4Climate supports young climate innovators through direct funding, capacity development, mentorship, visibility and access to a growing global network.

Since 2023, Youth4Climate has supported 200 youth-led solutions across 69 countries, providing more than USD 5 million in direct support. Beyond funding, the initiative helps young people strengthen their projects, learn from experts and peers, and connect with institutions and partners that can help their solutions grow.

Youth4Climate has also gained international recognition, including being highlighted by G7 leaders as a best practice for youth engagement in climate action. In June 2026, it was

among the experiences featured in Ne parliamo con il Presidente. La Repubblica che verrà, the Rai 1 programme marking the 80th anniversary of the Italian Republic through a conversation between young people and President Sergio Mattarella.

More information: y4c2026.com

About UNDP Rome Centre

UNDP is the leading UN agency for international development: at global level, the organization supports countries and local communities in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, working in around 170 countries and territories to end poverty, reduce inequality and tackle the climate crisis.

Inaugurated in 2019 in the framework of the G7, the UNDP Rome Centre for Climate Action and Energy Transition is a global platform for the strategic partnership between UNDP and the Italian ecosystem. It supports developing countries in advancing clean energy, climate resilience and climate innovation. UNDP Rome Centre works with governments, project developers, financial institutions and civil society to move climate and energy solutions from early concept towards investment and implementation. The Centre provides technical support across project development, financial structuring, environmental and social assessments, and engagement with public and private financiers, while also supporting youth-led climate solutions through direct catalytic financing, mentorship and partnerships. Working through UNDP's global network and in partnership with the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security, the Rome Centre currently supports programmes across +70 countries, with a focus on unlocking finance and building stronger pipelines of investable, locally grounded climate solutions.

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